



City of Greenbelt

# Animal Control

---



## ***Suggested Standards and Practices***



It is estimated that 60% of all homes is shared with a pet. Pets bring much joy and companionship to our lives. But pets also bring duties and responsibilities to each of us. We must care for the needs of our pets just as we would care for the needs of our human family members.

There are many abandoned, abused and neglected animals in the world. All too often families find that they were ill-prepared for the responsibilities of pet ownership and either abandon their pets, or fail to properly care for them.

As a civilized society, we recognize that all animals deserve humane treatment. There are laws which establish minimum requirements for the safe and healthful treatment of our animal family members. Harsh penalties can be invoked for acts of neglect and abuse. Animals not properly cared for can be removed from a home.

Most pets are loving and gentle creatures that only wish to please us. The needs of your pet are basic. The following guidelines are intended to provide information about the basic care of your pets. Most people will find that providing proper care to your dog, cat, guinea pig and fish, will result in a happy and healthy pet, and will bring unlimited pleasure to your life.

## Food, Glorious Food

Just as we get hungry and need food during the day, so do Rover and Mittens. However, the food you might feed yourself and your family is probably not the correct food for your pet. Nutritional needs for our animal companions vary according to species, age, size and many other factors. Your

veterinarian should be able to guide you regarding the type, amount and frequency which your pet should be fed. Some other points to keep in mind:



- *Food should be wholesome, palatable, and free from contamination. It must be provided in sufficient quantity and be of adequate nutritional value to maintain your animal's good health.*

- *Your pet's diet should be prepared considering the age, species, condition, size and breed of the animal. What's right for Rover might not suit the cat, hamster or fish at all.*

- *Animals should be fed at least once a day, unless otherwise directed by your veterinarian.*

- *Food receptacles should be kept clean and sanitary. Make sure that food containers are kept covered, or else other uninvited guests might find their way into the food.*

- *If you are feeding more than one animal at a time, make sure that each animal receives enough food.*

## These pretzels are making me thirsty

OK, your pet doesn't eat pretzels, but deprived of water, your pet will quickly become ill. Nothing is more important to your pet's health than having sufficient water. Keep these points in mind:

- *Clean, drinkable water should be available to your pet **at all times.***

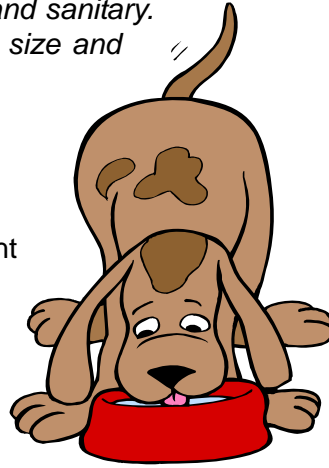
- *Animals that are being worked, exercised or are in transport should be provided water as often as necessary for the health and comfort of the animal. The age, species, condition, size and breed of the animal should be considered when determining the frequency to provide water. One also must consider the activity level and climatic conditions when determining the amount and frequency of watering.*



■ *Water receptacles shall be kept clean and sanitary. Make sure the water container is of a proper size and designed to prevent spillage.*

## **I need some fresh air**

When we feel a room is warm or stuffy, we can open a window or go for a walk. This isn't necessarily the case for our pets. While it might not seem so, fresh air is important to pets. For pets that are roaming through the house, there is probably ample fresh air. However, if your pet is confined to a room, make sure that there is a source of fresh air or mechanical ventilation. Not only will this help Fido or Feline feel fine, it will keep down on any smells.



## **Even though they don't have elbows, they still need elbow room**

Sometimes it is necessary to confine your animal family members. There is a difference of opinion among animal experts regarding the practice of caging and tethering pets. Knowing that certain modes of confinement are unhealthy and stressful for your pet will allow you to avoid conditions which might be harmful to your four-legged friends. The following are not recommended modes of confinement for your pet. Rather these reflect recommended practices should you need to confine your pet in one of these ways.

■ *When caged, enclosed or tethered all animals must be able to stand to their full height, stretch out, turn around, lie down, and make normal postural adjustments with ease.*

■ *To reduce stress, animals must be allowed to exercise and have freedom of movement. The space, time and opportunity for exercise should be appropriate to the species and size of the pet.*

■ *The space given your pet for exercise must be usable. It should be free of standing water, waste, trash, garbage, rubbish and debris.*

■ *The health and temperament of your pet will provide some indication if he, she or they are not being given sufficient room to move and exercise. Animals deprived of this opportunity may exhibit poor overall health, abnormal behaviors such as pacing, or circling, as well as other signs of stress.*



■ *Caged confinement of dogs and cats is restrictive and stressful and is only appropriate for temporary confinement. Before caging your dog or cat as a daily practice, consult with your veterinarian. Other times when temporary caging may be required would be during transport.*

■ *If a dog is kept in a cage, it should be removed and allowed to exercise at least twice a day for no less than one-half hour per exercise period. Ideally, two hours of out-of-cage exercise should be provided. More frequent exercise is recommended to give your dog ample opportunity to relieve itself outside of the cage.*

■ *Dogs kept in cages should be monitored to ensure that the cage is free of fecal matter and urine.*

■ *Cats confined in cages should be provided with litter pans and litter material. Litter pans should be kept clean and litter material changed as needed to prevent odor and accumulation of waste.*

■ *Cages for small mammals (guinea pigs, rabbits, hamsters) should be of sufficient size to permit foraging activities, exercise and should contain a place to burrow or nest.*

■ *The size of a pen should be determined based on the size and number of dogs to be housed. When housing dogs together, make sure that they are socially compatible. The maximum recommended number of dogs to be housed in a single pen is four.*

■ *In addition to the pen, a shelter should be available to provide refuge from the elements.*



## **Tethering may be good for blimps and balloons**

... but generally is not good for a dog. Whether tethered on a chain, rope or other form of lead, these are abnormally restrictive and stressful modes of confinement and often lead to health and temperament problems. Many

dogs suffer unnecessarily because an owner believes that tethering, particularly for extended periods of time, is a suitable way to confine an animal.



While tethering as a daily or routine mode of confinement is not recommended, there may be certain situations where tethering, when combined with daily socialization and exercise, reduces the stress on the dog.

If a dog must be tethered, it is recommended that such tethering be done only under the following conditions:

- *Any tether should be no less than 15 feet in practical length. The tether should be affixed and positioned to prevent tangling, or hanging.*
- *Tethered dogs should be fitted with a harness or buckle collar.*
- *Tethered dogs should be released from their tether at least twice daily.*
- *A properly installed and positioned running line is preferable to a stationary tether.*
- *Animals should not be tethered unless under the direct supervision of an individual capable of handling the dog.*

## Let there be light

Certainly an animal's need for light is different than a person's. After all, how many animals require a light to read the paper? Nonetheless, most animals need light on a daily basis. Ideally, at least ten hours of light should be provided. Now granted, Rover and Mittens may choose to sleep in the sunlight, and wouldn't we all given the chance. But just as animals deprived of space to move and fresh air to breath may exhibit health and behavior anomalies, so will animals deprived of adequate light. Of course, if your pet happens to hibernate, it probably isn't a good idea to stick a floor lamp in their den. But for most traditional house pets, daily exposure to light will help keep them healthy and happy.

## Gimme Shelter

Every animal needs proper shelter. Animals instinctively seek and make their own shelter. Ever wonder why the dog likes to sleep under the table? For our pets, we need to make sure that shelter is provided, and is provided in a manner that is safe and comfortable. If you follow these guidelines, you and your pet should both be



■ Shelter must be properly cooled and/or heated, to protect pets from the harmful affects of extreme temperatures.

■ If your pet is allowed to spend extended periods in the out-of-doors, provide a shelter to protect him or her from the weather.

■ If you provide a dog house or other outside shelter, make sure it is large enough for your pet. It should have a roof, sides, a doorway and a solid, level floor raised two inches from the ground. Preferably, the shelter should be kept in the shade, particularly during the summer months.

■ During those times of the year when the temperature (accounting for wind chill and precipitation) is 45 degrees Fahrenheit or lower, ensure that any outside shelter has a door way that is protected by a self closing door or flexible flap. You should also place bedding materials, such as cedar shavings, straw, or some other non-absorbent material, in the shelter. If the bedding becomes overly soiled or wet, it should be replaced.



### Doctor, doctor, give me the news

One of the decisions one must make before bringing a pet into the home, is whether you are willing and able to provide adequate preventative and emergency medical treatment for the pet. In order to protect your pet from suffering due to illness, and to protect you and your family from illnesses borne by animals, your pets will need annual immunizations from your vet. Remember these

points as you care for your pet:

■ Any animal should be provided immediate veterinary care if you know or suspect that the animal has suffered an accidental or deliberate injury.

■ Signs of injury or illnesses in animals include temperature fluctuation, tremors, swelling, obvious displaced bones, open wounds, inability to eat or drink, blistering, irregular or abnormal breathing, partial or total paralysis, strange or irrational behavior, abnormal discharge or bleeding, signs of debilitation or weakening, bloating, excessive vomiting or diarrhea or other signs that the animal is not well.

■ An animal that has exhibited signs of disease or parasitic infestation such as loss of appetite, weight



*loss, abnormal skin conditions, hair loss, tremors, inability to bear weight on a limb, lameness or other such signs over a period of 48 hours or more should be evaluated by a veterinarian.*

One of the most difficult decisions any pet owner must make regards the quality of life for an aged, ill or injured animal. Discuss these decisions with your pet's doctor, keeping in mind that no animal should be subjected to unnecessary suffering.

## **I Feel Pretty**

Just as people require skin, hair and feet care, so do your pets. Depending on the type of pet, bathing, brushing, and nail care may be part of your responsibilities for your animal's health and well-being. Equip yourself with the proper tools to provide this care, or locate a reliable and clean grooming service to provide these services. Both four and two legged family members will be more comfortable if Fido and Frisky are properly groomed.

## **Fix Your Critter and Opt to Adopt**

Statistics show that there are 70,000 puppies and kittens born for every 10,000 human births. There simply are not enough homes for all of these animals. As a result, 7 million animals are euthanized every year.

There are a number of ways we can make small contributions to the challenge of pet overpopulation. As a pet owner, have Fido or Frisky spayed or neutered. Having your pet altered is not only socially responsible; there are other many good reasons to do this for yourself and for your pet:

- *Altered animals live longer, healthier lives. Female cats and dogs have reduced risks of uterine, ovarian and breast cancers; male cats and dogs have reduced risks of prostate cancer and related disorders.*
- *As your pet will run a reduced risk of health problems, the potential for the pet owner to be faced with costly vet bills will also be reduced.*



*Altered animals make better, more affectionate companions.*



- *Neutered cats are less likely to spray and mark territory.*
- *Spaying female dogs and cats eliminates the heat cycle. This means the possibility that crying, nervous and unwanted male dogs and cats lingering around your home will also be eliminated.*
- *Neutered males are less likely to roam, run away, or get into fights.*
- *Altered animals are less likely to bite. They are generally calmer and more even-tempered.*



Even with responsible pet owners choosing to have their four legged family members spayed or neutered, there are still many unwanted, yet very loving and lovable animals waiting in shelters throughout the country for good homes. Half of all animals in shelters must be euthanized for lack of homes. Animal shelters can be your best source when looking for a pet. They have

great selections of adult animals, as well as kittens and puppies. Even purebred animals can be found in your local shelter, as they account for 25-30% of a shelter's dog population.

It is untrue that animals in shelters are somehow unsuitable for family adoption. Most responsible shelters screen animals brought to them for sound health and suitable temperament. It is to everyone's benefit to find a good match between shelter animals and adoptive family, otherwise the animal will be returned to the shelter.

Many shelters have web sites which display the animals available for adoption. As well, shelters and rescue groups often sponsor adoption shows at local pet stores during the week. There are many rescue groups, both general and breed specific, which also serve to place homeless animals with good families.



Just remember that pet ownership is not a right, it is a responsibility. Prepare for your pet ownership experience with the same care you would approach any major life commitment. Animals are living, feeling creatures entitled to respect and compassionate treatment. Dedicate yourself to opening your home to a homeless canine or feline, and you will be repaid with their lifetime of love.

*“By associating with the  
cat one only risks  
becoming richer”  
- Colette*

*“Happiness is a warm  
puppy”  
- Charles Schultz*



Including a dog, cat, fish, guinea pig, hamster, bird, or other animal, or reptile as part of your family will bring countless joys, but also brings certain responsibilities. The City of Greenbelt, through its Animal Control Program, is dedicated to strengthening and improving that bond between human and animal.

This document is not intended to provide an exhaustive review of the many issues you might face as a pet owner, but it does set forth some general guidelines to help you understand factors of importance in the care of domestic animals.

If you have any questions, problems, or require assistance in the care of your pet, or you have concerns about the health, care and welfare of any animals, whether in the wild or held as pets, you may contact the **Greenbelt Animal Control Officer at (301)474-6124.**

